



**U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION 8**

**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP)  
FOR THE SAMPLING OF ASBESTOS FIBERS IN AIR**

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REVISION LOG

Revision Date	Reason for Revision
02/28/01	--
03/07/01	Further define pump calibration procedures.

## **PROCEDURAL SECTION**

### **1.0 Scope and Applicability**

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) provides a standardized method for sampling air to measure the concentration of asbestos fibers. This SOP is applicable to any type of asbestos fiber (amphibole, chrysotile) that may exist in air (either indoor or outdoor), and is applicable to both personal and ambient air (referred as stationary air throughout this SOP) sampling techniques. Filters collected in this way are suitable for examination by a variety of microscopic techniques, including TEM, PCM, and SEM.

### **2.0 Summary of Method**

This SOP is based on air sampling techniques described in EPA SOP 2015, ISO 10312, OSHA Technical Manual, NIOSH 7400 and NIOSH 7402.

Air is drawn through a fine-pore filter in order to trap any suspended particulate matter in the air, including suspended asbestos fibers and other mineralogic materials. The filters are then examined using an appropriate microscopic technique to observe, characterize and quantify the number of asbestos fibers on the filter. The concentration of fibers in air is then calculated by dividing the total number of fibers on the filter by the volume of air drawn through the filter.

### **3.0 Health and Safety Warnings**

Asbestos fibers are hazardous to human health when inhaled. Exposure to excessive levels may increase the risk of lung cancer, mesothelioma, and asbestosis. All personnel engaged in collection of air samples in areas where asbestos fibers may be present must have adequate health and safety training and must wear an appropriate level of personal protective equipment (PPE). Refer to the Health and Safety Plan for further details.

### **4.0 Cautions**

None, refer to Section 3.0.

### **5.0 Interferences**

High levels of dust or other suspended particulates may clog or overload the filter and reduce the ability to observe and characterize asbestos fibers on the filters. Precautions should be taken to avoid any unnecessary sources of dust emissions or use of aerosol sprays. Sampling

conditions (flow rate, sampling time) should be adjusted accordingly to avoid filter overload.

## **6.0 Personnel Qualifications**

Field personnel engaged in collection of filter cassettes must be trained in the proper use and calibration of the air sampling equipment (as specified in this SOP), as well as proper methods for data recording and sample handling. Additionally, all field personnel must maintain appropriate and current training and/or certifications to meet all federal, state, and local regulations.

## **7.0 Apparatus and Equipment**

### **Filter Cassettes**

All samples will be collected on conductive filter holders consisting of 25-mm diameter, three piece filter cassettes having a 50-mm long electrically conductive extension cowl. The cassette shall be pre-loaded with a mixed cellulose ester (MCE) filter with pore size 0.8  $\mu\text{m}$ . Use of the 0.8  $\mu\text{m}$  pore size is recommended for all samples so that samples collected using a high volume pump are comparable to samples collected with a low volume pump. The 0.8  $\mu\text{m}$  pore size filters are used for samples collected with a low volume pump in order to decrease back-pressure and increase flow rate.

To reduce contamination and to hold the cassette tightly together, seal the crease between the cassette base and the cowl with a shrink band or adhesive tape. If particle deposition on the inside of the cowl is observed, it may be necessary to ground the cowl to reduce static charge. This is done by attaching one end of a length of flexible wire to the plastic cowl with a hose clamp and attaching the other end of the wire to a suitable ground (e.g., a cold water pipe).

### **Air Pumps**

The sampling pump used shall provide a non-fluctuating airflow through the filter and shall maintain the initial flow rate within  $\pm 10\%$  throughout the sampling period.

A variety of different types of air pump may be used, depending on the flow rates that are required to achieve the data quality objectives and desired analytical sensitivity of the project. In general, the pump should be selected to deliver a flow rate that is as high as possible without overloading the filter with dust or fibers. The minimum flow rate is 0.5 L/min, and rates up to 10 L/min may be appropriate in some cases.

For stationary air monitors, a high volume pump that operates on AC power is recommended.

For personal air sampling, either a portable high volume AC powered sampler or a low volume battery-operated pump are acceptable, depending on whether the activities of the individual are impaired by the tethering imposed by the power cord needed for the high volume pump.

#### Tripod

For stationary air monitors, a tripod or other similar device is required to hold the filter cassette at a specified elevation above the floor. As noted below, this will typically be a height that represents the breathing zone (1.5-2 meters).

#### Spring Clips

For personal air monitors, the filter cassette is held in place using spring clips or other similar devices.

#### Rotameter

A rotameter that has been calibrated to a primary calibration source is required to calibrate the air flow rate at the start and the end of each sampling period. Due to its dependency on changes in atmospheric pressure, the rotameter must be calibrated to a primary calibration source at the site location (e.g., City of Libby) prior to sampling and re-calibrated on-site every week. Record calibration and re-calibration to the primary standard in the field logbook.

#### Primary Calibration Source

A bubble buret or other primary calibration standard may be used to calibrate the rotameter.

#### Sample Labels

A pre-printed sheet of sample labels (2 identical labels per sample number) is required. One label should be attached to the filter cassette before the sample collection period begins, and the matching label should be attached to the field data sheet that records relevant data on the sample being collected.

#### Field Log Book

A field log book is required to record relevant information regarding the collection of samples (location, time, unusual conditions or problems, etc.).

#### Field Data Sheet

A personal air or stationary air monitoring field data sheet (as appropriate) is required to record the relevant sampling information. Refer to the Phase 2 QAPP (EPA, March 2001) for the form.

## **8.0 Instrument Calibration**

External calibration devices such as a bubble buret or a rotameter that have been calibrated to a primary calibration source may be used to calibrate air flow rate prior to air sampling. The flow rate must also be measured by the same method at the end of the sampling period.

### **8.1 Calibrating a Rotameter with an Electronic Calibrator (DryCal)**

- See manufacturer's manual for operational instructions.
- To set up the calibration train, attach one end of the tygon tubing to the outlet plug of the rotameter; attach the other end of the tubing to the inlet plug on the pump. Another piece of tubing is attached from the inlet plug of the rotameter to the outlet plug on the DryCal.
- Rest or firmly stabilize the rotameter so that it is vertical ( $\pm 6^\circ$ ).
- Attach an isolating load with a pressure drop of about 10 to 20 inches of water column in series with a stable pump (a filter cassette of same lot number as will be used for field samples works well for this).
- Turn the DryCal and sampling pump on.
- Turn the flow adjust screw (or knob) on the pump until the desired flow rate is attained.
- Record the DryCal flow rate reading and the corresponding rotameter reading in the field logbook. The rotameter should be able to work within the desired flow range.
- Perform the calibration three times until the desired flow rate of  $\pm 5\%$  is attained. Once at the sampling location, a secondary calibrator (e.g., rotameter) may be used to calibrate sampling pumps.

### **8.2 Calibrating an Air Pump with a Rotameter**

A rotameter can be used provided it has been precalibrated to a primary calibration source at the site location (e.g., City of Libby). Three separate constant flow calibration readings should be obtained both before sampling and after sampling. The mean value of these flow rate measurements shall be used to calculate the total air volume sampled.

Turn on the sampling pump and run for 5 minutes before performing calibration.

- Remove the end plugs on the filter cassette. A cassette, representative of the lot planned for use in air sampling, must be used.
- To set up the calibration train, attach one end of the tygon tubing to the cassette base; attach the other end of the tubing to the inlet plug on the pump. Another piece of tubing is attached from the cassette cap to the rotameter.

- Rest or firmly stabilize the flow meter so that it is vertical ( $\pm 6^\circ$ ).
- Turn the flow adjust screw (or knob) on the sampling pump until the center of the float ball on the rotameter meets the flow rate value specified in the project plan.

## **9.0 Sample Collection**

Apply one of the pre-printed adhesive labels to the filter cassette and apply the other to the field data sheet for the sample.

Secure the filter cassette in the appropriate sampling location. For a fixed air monitor, this will generally be at a height that represents the breathing zone of the potentially exposed population (e.g., 1.5- 2 meters above the floor). For personal air monitoring, the cassette will typically be placed on the lapel just below the face of the individual being monitored. For personal air sampling for Scenarios 2 and 3 [Refer to Phase 2 QAPP (EPA March 2001)] , secure the cassette on the lapel of the dominant hand of the worker. The distance from the nose/mouth of the person to the cassette should be about 10 cm. Secure the cassette on the collar or lapel using spring clips or other similar devices. In all cases, orient the cassette so the open face of the cowl is pointing downward to avoid any particles entering the filter by precipitation. Remove the protective cap over the open face of the cowl and turn on the calibrated pump. Record the starting time, the initial flow rate, and all other relevant sample data on the field data sheet for the sample. Store covers and end plugs in a clean area (e.g., a closed bag or box) during the sampling period.

For sampling events lasting longer than 2 hours, in-field pump checks should be performed approximately every 2 hours. These periodic checks should include the following activities:

- Observe the sampling apparatus (filter cassette, pump, tripod, etc.) to determine whether it's been disturbed.
- Check the pump to ensure it is working properly and the flow rate is stable at the prescribed flow rate.
- Inspect the filter for overloading and particle deposition. Inspect the filter using a small flashlight. Look for particle adhesion or deposition on the side of the cassette and check the filter surface for accumulation of visible dust or smoke particles. If particle deposition on the inside of the cowl is observed, it may be necessary to ground the cowl to reduce static charge.

After the specified sampling period has elapsed, measure the ending flow rate and ending clock time on the data sheet. Turn off the pump and remove the cassette from the pump. Attach and secure a sample seal around each sample cassette in such a way as to assure that the end cap and

base plug cannot be removed without destroying the seal. Tape the ends of the seal together since the seal is not long enough to be wrapped end-to-end. Initial and date the seal.

#### **10. Sample Handling and Preservation**

Package the cassettes so they will not rattle during shipment nor be exposed to static electricity. Place custody seals, dated and marked with the packager's signature, onto the shipping container. Do not ship samples in polystyrene peanuts, vermiculite, paper shreds, or excelsior. Tape sample cassettes to sheet bubbles and place in a container that will cushion the samples in such a manner that they will not rattle. For additional shipping requirements, see the project plan.

Ship the sealed cassette to the analytical laboratory under proper chain of custody procedures. No preservation of the cassette is required.

### **QUALITY CONTROL and QUALITY ASSURANCE**

#### **Pre-Project Filter ("Lot") Blanks**

Before samples are collected, two cassettes from each filter lot of 100 cassettes should be randomly selected and submitted for analysis. The lot blanks will be analyzed for asbestos fibers by the same method as will be used for field samples. The entire batch of cassettes should be rejected if any asbestos fiber is detected on any filter.

#### **Field Blanks**

Blank samples are used to determine if any contamination has occurred during sample handling. Prepare two blanks (from the sample lot used for field sampling) for the first 1 to 20 samples. For sets containing greater than 20 samples, prepare blanks as 10% of the samples. Filter blanks should be taken to a sampling location and prepared there. Remove the caps on the filter cassette and hold the cassette open for about 30 seconds. Close and seal the cassette as described in Section 9. Store blanks for shipment with the sample cassettes.



## **REFERENCES**

NIOSH 7400

NIOSH 7402

ISO 10312

OSHA Technical Manual

EPA SOP 2015